

bond cemented by honesty and time and, importantly, by trust. The doctor-patient relationship is the bedrock of the entire health care system, and it is one of the main reasons that people choose to go into medicine in the first place. That relationship between doctors and their patients is under threat, and all too often in our Nation today, Mr. Speaker, the bond is being jeopardized by HMOs who are more interested in their profit statement than their mission statement.

Mr. Speaker, there are insurance companies that are trying to do a good job and many compassionate people working for those companies, but frankly the focus on profits taken by some HMOs makes you think they have more in common with Neiman Marcus than Marcus Welby.

All of us have heard the stories, all of us here have, all of us on both sides of the aisle, families who worry that an insurance company clerk rather than their doctor will decide what treatment they get, providers who are afraid to tell their patients all of the health care options available to them because some might cost more, doctors who are restricted in what medicines they can prescribe and families who have to go through endless appeals and mountains of paperwork just to get the care they deserve.

Just yesterday my colleague, FRANK PALLONE, and I met with constituents at Centrist State Medical Center in Monmouth County, New Jersey, to discuss this issue. We heard from people, a variety of people involved in health care: doctors, nurses, patients, hospital administrators and consumer advocates, men and women who serve every day on the front lines of health care. They had one message for us here in Washington, Mr. Speaker: Pass a Federal Patients' Bill of Rights, legislation that will ensure that medical decisions are not held hostage to business decisions.

House Speaker HASTERT recently said that he is willing to bring single-issue patients' rights bills to the House floor, bills dealing with issues like gag rules, emergency room standards and direct access to specialists. There is no doubt that these are issues that we need to address, but we cannot, we must not use them as an excuse to avoid tackling comprehensive patients' rights or we should not use them to dodge the important questions, issues of accountability and liability.

As soon as we raise the question of liability, people say, oh, we should not let lawyers run this. Of course we do not want a health care system run by lawsuits, driven by lawsuits, but the question is: Who has the last word on medical decisions? That is what we have to protect.

HMO horror stories are not isolated incidents. They are happening to families every day in my district and in yours, people who work hard and thought they were protected, people who see their loved ones denied the

care they need and are powerless to do anything about it.

We need to act in a bipartisan way to see that insurance companies are held accountable for their decisions, their medical decisions, and that they start to think twice before they deny payment for needed care and, in effect, deny the care. Mr. Speaker, we need to pass the Patients' Bill of Rights now.

Mr. BAIRD. Thank you very much, Congressman. I appreciate those remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to conclude with just a few final comments. I, first of all, want to express my gratitude for my colleagues, particularly the fact that they are from the freshman class. These are folks who have just been on the front lines of often very difficult and challenging campaigns, but in the middle of those campaigns they listened to their constituents, they listened to their needs, and they carried those needs here to this body, and I hope this body will act on those needs.

So I am very proud to serve as president of our freshman class, and I want to thank again my colleagues. I want to also make just a couple of final remarks.

I asked to fill this role today because, in addition to being a Member of Congress, I am a health care provider myself. As a licensed clinical psychologist, I work with cancer patients, with head injury patients, with people dying of a number of terminal illnesses and with patients facing severe depression. I know firsthand the toll it takes on patients and the toll it takes on our providers and on our families and, frankly, on this country as a whole to have the current system.

There is a common saying, and the saying is: If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

Mr. Speaker, I would assert to you and the people we represent would assert to you and to this body that this system is broke and it is incumbent upon us as their elected representatives to fix it. I believe the Patients' Bill of Rights that gives you the right to choose your provider, gives your provider the option, the responsibility to determine your health care needs and that holds HMOs and managed care firms accountable is the solution to this system which is broken.

Thank you very much.

WHOSE MONEY IS IT?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, I rise for a few minutes to talk about some issues I heard about back home during the Presidents' Day recess.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege of representing a very, very diverse district. I represent part of the City of Chicago, the south suburbs in Cook and Will Counties, farm communities and a lot of bedroom communities. When a district is so diverse,

you really want to listen and learn the concerns of the people you have the privilege of representing. And I find that even though our district is so diverse, city, suburbs and country, that there is a pretty clear message, and that is that the folks back home want us in this Congress to work together to solve the challenges that we face. And I am pretty proud that this Congress over the last 4 years has responded by doing some things we were told we could not do: balancing the budget for the first time in 28 years, cutting taxes for the middle class for the first time in 16 years, reforming welfare for the first time in a generation and taming the tax collector by reforming the IRS. And those are real accomplishments, real accomplishments that I believe we should all be proud of.

And when I was back home over the last week listening to the folks back home, I asked, what do you want us to do next? And they tell me that they want good schools, they tell me that they want low taxes, they tell me that they want a secure retirement, and I am pleased to say that that is the majority's agenda here in this House of Representatives, to help our schools and put more dollars in the classroom and to give control of our schools back to parents and teachers and locally elected school boards. It is our agenda to lower the tax burden on the middle class because we believe that you can spend your hard-earned dollars better back home than we can for you here in Washington, and we also want to ensure a secure retirement by saving Social Security and rewarding those who save for their own retirement.

But today we face an even bigger challenge probably as part of this whole process as we work on our agenda as both a challenge and it is an opportunity, and that is the balanced budget bonus, the overpayment, the extra tax revenue that came from 4 years of hard work of balancing the budget. Expect that this overpayment of tax revenues is going to total \$2.7 trillion over the next 10 years.

That is a lot of money, and it is extra money, and the debate is what are we going to do with it? Do we spend it? It is burning a hole in Congress' pocket. Or do we give it back to the folks back home?

Now the President said that we should take 62 percent of this surplus revenue and use it to save Social Security, and then he wants to spend the rest on new government programs. A lot of us here in the Congress say that we should agree with the President on that 62 percent and, rather than creating new government programs after we save social security, that we should give the rest back and pay down the national debt thereby lowering the tax burden.

And that is really a fundamental question: Whose money is it to start with?

□ 1730

Whose money is it to start with? We know that. It is the taxpayers. But who can better spend it? Folks back home. That is you. Or is it, of course, Washington? Can Washington spend it better than we can?

Now, we the Republican majority believe that you can spend it better than we can for you and that is really why this is such an important debate this year, because we have to look at the issue of taxes in general.

Some say why is a tax cut so important? Well, if you look at how it affects families back in Illinois, the tax burden today is at its highest level ever in peacetime. In fact, 40 percent of the average Illinois family's income now goes to local, State and Federal government in taxes. The tax-take totals 21 percent of our Gross Domestic Product, and since 1992 the total collection of income taxes from individuals has gone up 63 percent. Clearly, the tax burden is too high.

The question then is, how can we lower the tax burden for the middle class? How can we help middle class families? I believe that we should focus on tax simplification, because is not it time that we bring fairness to the Tax Code? Is not it time to end discrimination in the Tax Code? As we set priorities this year, to help the middle class by simplifying the Tax Code, I believe that we should simplify the Tax Code by ending discrimination against 21 million married working couples who suffer the marriage tax penalty, and really it is a very fundamental question.

Is it right, is it fair, that under our Tax Code, that 21 million married working couples pay on average \$1,400 more in higher taxes just because they are married?

Now in the south suburbs of Chicago, \$1,400 is one year's tuition at Joliet College. It is 3 months of day care at a local day care center. It is 6 months worth of car payments for some of those machinists that visited us today.

I am pleased to announce that 230 Members have joined as cosponsors of the Marriage Tax Elimination Act. Clearly, there is bipartisan support for simplifying the Tax Code and bringing fairness to the Tax Code by eliminating the extra tax on married working couples.

Let us work together. Let us bring fairness. Let us simplify the Tax Code and eliminate the marriage tax penalty this year.

TRIBUTE TO BOB LIVINGSTON, REPRESENTATIVE FROM THE FIRST DISTRICT OF LOUISIANA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. TAUZIN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, I take this special order tonight so that Mem-

bers of the Louisiana delegation and colleagues from across our country can honor the service of a gentleman who will be leaving our body as a Member on the 28th of this month, just a few days from now; that being the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LIVINGSTON).

Of course, Louisiana is still literally in shock that we are losing the services of this man who has represented our State so admirably for so many years, since 1977 when he first came by virtue of a special election, the first Republican elected in the First District of Louisiana in 102 years, and has served our State for the past 11 terms, and most recently for the last four years as chairman of the most important committee of this body, the Committee on Appropriations.

Bob is leaving many, many friends behind when he takes his leave from us on the 28th, not just friends and colleagues who have worked with him but friends who have known him personally, as I have, and others, throughout his political career. Bob is an extraordinary individual and, as he leaves this body, I thought it important that we take some time out to say thank you to him for his friendship, his service to our State and this country and to the many people of the First District in Louisiana who mourn and grieve the fact that he will be leaving public service in just a few days.

Colleagues have come to join me today in honoring him and remembering his great work for our country, and I would like now to yield time to my friend from Louisiana (Mr. MCCRERY) for comments.

Mr. MCCRERY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. TAUZIN) for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, it is with mixed emotions that I appear on the floor today. On the one hand, I regret that our colleague, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LIVINGSTON) will be leaving the House at the end of this week and, as my colleague, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. TAUZIN) said, ending his long, distinguished public service.

On the other hand, it is a pleasure for me to come to the floor and say some things about my retiring colleague, the gentleman from Louisiana (Mr. LIVINGSTON) perhaps that a lot of people do not know, and be able to share those experiences that I have had with him with the public.

When I came to this body 10 or 11 years ago as a freshman, never having held public office before, I had a lot to learn. BOB LIVINGSTON I looked up to in more ways than one. He is a lot taller than I am, but also I had followed his distinguished career through the years and I knew that he was a person of substance, a person of character and learning, someone who, if he would, could teach me a lot about this body, how it works, how to get along here, how to get things done.

I suspected that because of his stature in this body, being a fairly senior

member even at that time of this body, and having the responsibilities that he had on the Committee on Appropriations and with his own district in the New Orleans area, that he would have little time for a new guy like me. Well, I was wrong. Well, I was right he did not have much time but I was wrong because he made time.

He took the time to counsel me on numerous occasions. He took the time even to travel with me to my district. Then I did not realize what a sacrifice that was for a Member, any Member, much less a senior Member of the Committee on Appropriations, to take a day away from his family, away from his work, to go to some other Member's district for that Member's benefit, but he did it. He flew from Washington to Shreveport, Louisiana, to help us in Shreveport with an economic development project.

Now that I realize, having been here awhile, what a sacrifice that was, it makes me appreciate that gesture on his part all the more. He is that type of individual. He is that type of human being, of person. He really goes beyond what is required of a Member of Congress. He really goes beyond what is required of a colleague, even a colleague from Louisiana, to help all of us.

I am sure each Member of the delegation can relate a similar story about BOB LIVINGSTON bending over backwards to try to help us with something that we needed in the State of Louisiana. So he has been a real asset to me and my growth here in this chamber. He has been a real asset to his home district. He has been a real asset to the State of Louisiana and to this country.

I will miss him. I know that Louisiana will miss him, and I would submit that the country will miss him as well. So it is with mixed emotions that I appear on the floor here today, but I have no mixed emotions about wishing my colleague from Louisiana, BOB LIVINGSTON, well. I wish he could stay with us a little longer but he thinks it is time for him to go, and he will do well in the private sector, I am sure. We look forward to seeing him here often, though, as he will still be able to share with us some of the wisdom and knowledge that he has gained over the years of his public service.

So, Mr. LIVINGSTON, wherever you are, and wherever you will be, know that I have cherished getting to know you, cherished the knowledge that I have gained from my visits with you and hope that you will know that I and many others in this chamber will miss you. Bon voyage. Come back and see us.

Mr. TAUZIN. Mr. Speaker, during the course of this hour, I will be telling some things about BOB LIVINGSTON as I introduce my colleagues. I thought it best, first, to say a little bit about his family history. It is important to note that one of BOB's immediate ancestors, for whom he is named, was ROBERT LIVINGSTON, the minister to France, who was sent on a great mission by